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AERIAL SPRAYING TO BE USED TO FIGHT EEE IN SOUTHEASTERN MASS

State health and environmental officials announced today that aerial spraying will be deployed for the first time in 16 years to minimize the threat of human biting mosquitoes that carry Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE).

The spraying of more than 159,000 acres of land in Southeastern Massachusetts will be done shortly after sunset, possibly as early as Monday, and is expected to last until about 1 a.m. If not completed in one night, it would be finished the next day at the same time.

“Indicators of higher human risk, coupled with the high levels of mosquito populations this summer, require measures to reduce the risk by not only reducing mosquito exposure, but by applying effective means of reducing mosquito numbers,” said Health and Human Services Secretary Timothy Murphy. “The level of risk makes the elimination of adult mosquitoes carrying infection necessary to protect the public health. We are going into the period of highest risk of infection in a situation of increased danger.”

The Department of Public Health, Department of Agricultural Resources and the Statewide Reclamation Mosquito Control Board reached the decision to spray after consultation with the Plymouth County Mosquito Control Program and the Mosquito Control Districts across the Commonwealth.

Unlike 16 years ago when three DC3s were used, the Commonwealth will use two small fixed-wing aircraft.

The agent to be used for reducing mosquito numbers is called Anvil. The active ingredient is sumithrin, a synthetic form of the pesticide that occurs naturally in chrysanthemums. This agent is the same one used for most truck-based spraying and has been applied from aircraft around the country to control mosquitoes. Because such low doses are used when applied from aircraft and the application is done at night, human exposure is limited. The sumithrin is rapidly broken down in the environment and has no residual effect.

“We’ve identified a good treatment that provides good results and minimizes the impact to both public health and the environment,” said Environmental Affairs Secretary Stephen R. Pritchard.

Since 1938, when EEE was first identified in Massachusetts there have been 87 cases reported, with 47 deaths. Most of the cases have occurred in residents of Plymouth, Bristol and Norfolk Counties.

“Although EEE is a rare disease, it is a very serious disease in human cost,” said Dr. Al DeMaria, chief medical officer for DPH. “We want to do everything possible to prevent even one human case from occurring.”

While reducing mosquito populations is an important way of reducing risk, risk of both EEE and West Nile virus infection remains. Everyone in Massachusetts should take additional measures to reduce their risk of viral infections carried by mosquitoes. These measures include the following:

1. Reduce Risk Around the Home

- **Install or Repair Screens** - Some mosquitoes like to come indoors. Keep them outside by having well-fitting screens on all of your windows and doors.
- **Drain Standing Water** - Mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water. Limit the number of places around your home for mosquitoes to breed by either draining or getting rid of items that hold water. Check rain gutters and drains. Empty any unused flowerpots and wading pools, and change water in birdbaths frequently.

2. Avoid Mosquitoes and Mosquito Bites

- **Avoid Outdoor Activity During Peak Mosquito Hours.** The hours from dusk to dawn are peak mosquito biting times for many mosquitoes. Take extra care to use repellent and protective clothing during evening and early morning or consider avoiding outdoor activities during these times.
- **Clothing Can Help** reduce mosquito bites. When possible, wear long-sleeves, long pants and socks when outdoors.
- **Apply Insect Repellent** when you go outdoors. A variety of insect repellent products is available. Always follow the instructions on the product label; repellent products provide guidance on how frequently they may be used and provide precautions on how they should be used. Pay particular attention to restrictions on use for children. The most effective repellents contain DEET (N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide), Picardin (KBR 3023) or Permethrin. DEET (avoid concentrations over 30 percent) and Picaridin can be used directly on skin and on clothing. Permethrin can be used only on clothing. Oil of lemon eucalyptus has also demonstrated efficacy against mosquito bites, with protection similar to repellents with low concentrations of DEET.

3. Help Your Community

- **Report Dead Birds to the DPH.** Dead birds may be a sign that WNV is circulating among the birds and mosquitoes in an area. Call 1-866-MASS WNV to report a dead bird. By reporting dead birds, you can play an important role in monitoring WNV.

Mosquito control in Massachusetts is conducted through nine mosquito control districts, with 159 member communities. You can check with your local health department to see if there is an organized mosquito control program in your area. DPH staff on the WNV hotline can also direct any questions you have to the appropriate personnel.

More information about the mosquito-borne diseases found in Massachusetts, EEE and WNV is available at the following DPH website: www.mass.gov/dph/wnv/wnv1.htm. Information about local mosquito control programs is available by calling your local health department. For questions about aerial spraying and health effects of pesticides or to report any concerns about adverse reactions to pesticides call the MDPH Center for Environmental Health at (617) 624-5757. Information about WNV is also available by calling the DPH recorded information line at 1-866-MASS-WNV (1-866-627-7968).

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